

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3264

INFO CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2527

DEPT PASS DIA; CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BGL 74

SUBJ: SOVIET SALVAGE OPERATION AT CHITTAGONG

1. SOVIET AMBASSADOR FOMIN CONFIRMED TO ME TODAY THAT SOVIET SALVAGE OPERATION WOULD END CONCLUSIVELY ON SCHEDULE JUNE 30. HE SAID THAT ADMIRAL ZUENKO AND THE MAIN FORCE OF THE OPERATION WOULD DEPART JUNE 10, LEAVING BEHIND A RESIDUAL TEAM OF SOME 20 OR 30 MEN WHO WOULD TRAIN BENGALIS IN USE OF SALVAGE EQUIPMENT BEING DONATED TO BANGLADESH, AND THAT THIS TEAM WOULD ALSO LEAVE THE COUNTRY ON JUNE 30.

2. FOMIN SAID THAT ZUENKO'S COMMAND HAD NUMBERED 700 AT ITS PEAK BUT THAT PRESENT NUMBER WAS SOMEWHAT LOWER. HE SAID THAT SOVIET GROUP HAD SALVAGED 26 VESSELS AND THAT SEVEN OR EIGHT HAD BEEN REHABILITATED.

3. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER GOLDS, WHO SPOKE TO ADMIRAL ZUENKO RECENTLY ABOUT HIS FORTHCOMING DEPARTURE, BELIEVES THAT WIND-UP OF SOVIET SALVAGE OPERATIONS AT CHITTAGONG IS AT BANGLADESH INSISTENCE AND HE SEES IT AS ANOTHER PROOF OF HIS CONTENTION THAT MUJIB DOES NOT REALLY TRUST THE SOVIETS. GOLDS SAID HE ASKED ADMIRAL ZUENKO WHETHER SOVIETS WERE TRYING TO SALVAGE GOLCONDA, CONFIDENTIAL

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A LARGE SHIP SUNK BY JAPANESE IN 1942 WHICH IS STILL A HAZARD TO

NAVIGATION IN CHITTAGONG. ZUENKO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THEY HAD OFFERED TO LIFT IT BUT BDG HAD REFUSED OFFER.

4. SOVIETS HAVE EXPOSED ADMIRAL ZUENKO TO THE PRESS TWICE IN PAST FEW MONTHS TO EMPHASIZE THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND WINDING-DOWN OF SALVAGE OPERATION. THESE SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL PRESS APPEARANCES HAVE FUELED SPECULATION THAT BDG HAS BEEN NERVOUS ABOUT VISIBILITY OF SOVIETS IN CHITTAGONG AND WANTED THE SALVAGE OPERATION TO END ON TIME. NEVERTHELESS, SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE AREA WILL REMAIN CONSIDERABLE WITH ITS AIR FORCE MISSION, CONSULATE AND TRADE MISSION. FISHING TRAWLER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, AND PLANS TO REVIVE ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURING PLANT.
BOSTER

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